



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Special 30-Day Window for Drought Assistance Offered to Farmers and Ranchers

DAVIS, Calif., April 7, 2009— Farmers and ranchers in designated counties with extreme or severe drought conditions may apply for assistance from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in California until May 8, 2009. During the special 30-day sign up, NRCS will take applications for \$2 million available for practices designed to protect soil and air quality in areas of fallowed fields, keep orchard trees alive, and protect natural resources on ranch and pasture land. Due to the extraordinary conditions NRCS will pay a higher-than-normal 75 percent cost share rate.

"Record low levels of water storage combined with low snow melt has dried up water deliveries to a point where folks are struggling just to keep trees going so they can live to bear a crop next year," says Ed Burton, State Conservationist for NRCS in California. Deliveries from both state and federal water projects are ranging from zero to 15 percent of normal. A half million acres of crop land has already been idled and projections suggest that figure could rise to 840,000 acres, with a projected \$2.8 billion direct loss to agriculture.

"Our best advice for preventing wind erosion is to leave some vegetative stubble or cover on the field," says Burton. "If the land is already harvested and tilled there are fewer options. Even in those cases, however, our conservationists are willing to take a look at the fields and see if surface roughening, straw mulch or silt fencing may help."

The \$2 million is being made available in the following counties: Alameda, Alpine, Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, Contra Costa, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Humboldt, Inyo, Kern, Kings, Lake, Lassen, Los Angeles, Madera, Marin, Mariposa, Mendocino, Merced, Modoc, Monterey, Napa, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento, San Benito, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Clara, Shasta, Sierra, Sonoma, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Tulare, Tuolumne, Yolo, and Yuba.

Practices being offered through the program include establishing vegetative cover, soil surface roughening, incorporation of soil-stabilizing organic matter, silt fencing adjacent to highways, irrigation water management, pruning to keep trees alive, livestock watering facilities, maintaining standing stubble and more. More information on the drought, conservation practices that may mitigate drought-related problems, and payment rates for the current drought initiative are available at www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/features/cadrought.html or by contacting your local NRCS office, listed in the government section of the phone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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